Application No.: 09/576,223   Docket No.: 20140-00238-US

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 are pending in the application. Favorable reconsideration of the application is requested.§

A proposed drawing correction is enclosed labeling Fig. 1 as prior art. Withdrawal of the objection thereto is requested.

Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 2-4 under 35 USC §112 is requested. Claims 2-4 depend on claim 1 which recites that the header package has rules defining "sealed packages". It is submitted that the term sealed package therefore has appropriate antecedent basis.

Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-11 and 13-21 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hall et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,138,119) in view of Ginter et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,185,683) is requested. Claims 1-11 and 13-21 are directed to a contract management apparatus and a computer product for creating a contract management package. In accordance with claim 1, a digital file is created to form a contract. The file includes a header package having rules defining a sealed package produced by a sealing party, a body containing a portion of the contract, and a validating signature generated from the rules. A sealing signature is generated from the header package and the sealed package according to a second key belonging to a sealing party.

These steps of forming a digital file which serves as a contract are not disclosed or suggested in Hall et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,138,119). Hall et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,138,119) describes a data structure which describes the layout of a providers particular rights management vehicle, such as a secure container. The descriptive data structures may be used as templates to create a container for packaging secure information.

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In reviewing the reference, there does not appear to be as set forth in Applicants claim 1, any header structure or sealed packages, as presently claimed, from which a sealing signature can be generated. Further, it is not clear from the reference whether the rules used to define the data structure are contained in a header package, as set forth in the rejected claims.

The dependent, rejected claims are specific to the structure of the header package, for instance per claim 2 it comprises a unique header identifying a type of sealed package and where the validating signature is generated from the rule the body in the header. Further per claim 8, the contract management apparatus reads from the header package rules defining sealed packages, as well as a validating signature. As set forth per claim 8, the validating party and a sealing party which created the sealed file are identified from the rules. Further, the packages are validated using a validated signature generated from the rules as well as with a second key that was used by a sealing party to seal the package.

The reference fails to disclose these specific steps. The Office Action admits that Hall et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,138,119) does not teach a sealing signature generated from the header package and the sealed packages according to the second key belonging to the sealing party (see page 3, item 6).

Referring now to Ginter et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,185,683), a document system for transferring secure documents is disclosed. While col. 22 refers to the fact that electronic fingerprints, handwritten signatures, seals may be utilized to establish the authenticity of the document, it does not disclose the specifics of Applicants rejected claims, wherein a digital file is provided having a header package with rules defining the sealed package as well as a validating signature generated from the rules. While it is clear that the '683 patent may anticipate some means of encryption, the currently claimed structure of a digital file is not disclosed in the reference.

Accordingly, the general teachings of providing authenticity of a document set forth in the secondary reference does not, when combined with the primary reference, yield or disclose the specific subject matter of Applicants claims.

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In view of the foregoing, favorable reconsideration is requested.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 50-0510, under Order No. 20140-00238-US from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Dated: 4/7/04   Respectfully submitted,

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